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Lieut.-Colonel T. Martin Late 4th K. O. Regiment

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AMMUNITION SUPPLY CAR.

By Lieut.-Colonel T. MARTIN, late 4th K. O. Regiment.

THE supply of ammunition to meet the requirements of the present breech-loading rifle has necessarily become a matter for serious consideration: the fear that men will expend too many cartridges in action has already been expressed by high authorities, and all sorts of *dodges* are had recourse to to prevent soldiers firing too fast; for instance, shouting out the names of men to fire during independent firing, desiring men to expend only two or three rounds on any given occasion, or making men count twenty paces between each shot while firing as skirmishers halted. Hints to Commanding Officers, entreaties to Officers, cautions to Supernumeraries, and orders to men, fail to restrict the expenditure of blank ammunition on pageant field days; the only means I can recommend, for conquering the *propensity*, is to tie two rounds together, and thus compel the men to untie them before firing them off. All this firing may answer to keep public expectation up to the mark; because, on such occasions, a "bouquet" of fire becomes as essential at the conclusion of a field day, as at a gala-night at the Crystal Palace.

If field-days are for the gratification of an admiring public, and to be got up cheaply, let us by all means obstruct the soldier in his endeavour to shorten the field day by showing off his Snider; but when our field days are for instruction, the soldier should be taught the real value of his breech-loader, and to become acquainted with "his own power," and how to use it on occasion when the favourable turn of the tide of battle may depend upon his being able to fire rapidly and well.

It does not require much experience for a private soldier to learn the value of *ball* ammunition on service; he may on a field day do his best to get rid of *blank* ammunition, in hopes of shortening the drill, but, in action, the consciousness that his life may depend upon the good use he makes of his *ball* ammunition, will influence him not to waste it.

We must not now-a-days judge of the soldier-element by the antiquated standard, which counted it perfection "that soldiers should not think;" that old-fashioned brutalizing idea has been swept away, and the educated British soldier of 1868 "thinks," and feels, that he has as much right to indulge in the luxury of thought as any one; and it cannot be denied that the march of intellect in the British soldier has kept pace with the improvement in his weapons.

"Extra ammunition" is now the outcry, and many suggestions have already been made, and experiments tried, as to the number of rounds a man should carry, and how he ought to carry them, but *all* agree upon flooring knapsacks during actual service.

As the map of Germany was changed in seven days, we may modestly suppose that any other map may be altered in a fortnight. We all

know that a man can be clothed and shod to meet the wear and tear of fourteen days' Moose shooting in Canada, without requiring any change but socks; why then should we not profit by this knowledge, and learn to dress and equip our troops for a fourteen days' war? We should leave our knapsacks or bundles in charge of the Control Department during war, at any point we start from for fourteen days' real active work. Give us plenty of ammunition, some dried beef, biscuit, and preserved potatoes, not as rations, but merely to carry in the event of rations failing on any particular day, or on getting too far ahead to receive any. We might ease the soldier of half the weight of his present knapsack, and still give him extra ammunition, a light waterproof, a blanket, a pair of extra socks, reserve food, a piece of soap and a towel, taking care to distribute these *valuables* conveniently and judiciously on his person. I have not mentioned boots, because they could always be supplemented from the enemy or the killed.

I now come to the stumbling block of all advance parties, out-posts, skirmishers, and indeed of lines and squares—the supply of Ammunition. There is no part of our regimental system so incomplete; I therefore hope that my endeavour to meet the deficiency may prove acceptable.

I have here a small ammunition hand car, of my construction, which can supply 40 rounds per man to a subdivision (Plate xv, fig. 1). This car can be drawn with perfect ease by a pioneer, drummer, or bandsman, and does not occupy more than a man's standing ground in the ranks, in column, or in square. The revolutions of the wheels are registered on a dial, which indicates the distance marched by the subdivision, a considerable advantage, because places to advance or retreat upon, can be accurately measured and marked for the information of others; the cars, however, need not all be provided with registers.

If it be feared that some men will fire rapidly in action merely to get rid of the weight of their ammunition, here then is a remedy, because when a man knows that there is a reserve supply of ammunition at hand, to make good his "wilful waste," he will scarcely take the trouble to fire quicker than absolutely necessary. One of the great advantages of this mode of supply is, that men will feel more confidence when they know that they are *backed* by a reserve of ammunition, and have not to trust to being supplied by means of draught-animals led by cowardly muleteers.

The pioneers of the period when fully equipped are neither useful nor warlike; they seem strapped, buckled, and pinioned to pickaxes, crowbars, and knapsacks. I would relieve the pioneer of his burden, and carry more useful tools on the "hand-car," or give each man a small pickaxe or hoe on service, as the French have. The car should carry a few gun-spikes, some tourniquets, plaster, and bandages for the use of the sub-division.

These ammunition hand-cars would also serve as magazines to out-posts, picquets, trenches, &c.

During action the ammunition of the killed and wounded could be collected in them for future supply; after action they would serve to remove the dead and wounded.

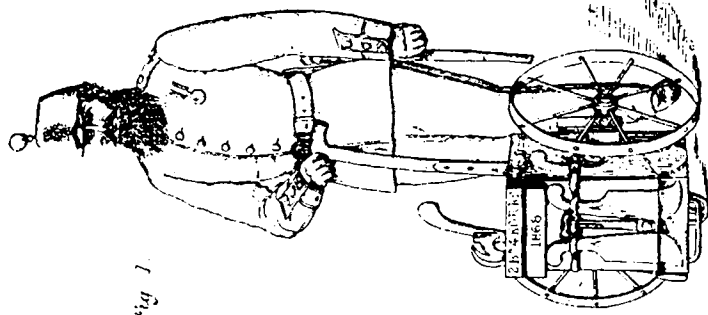
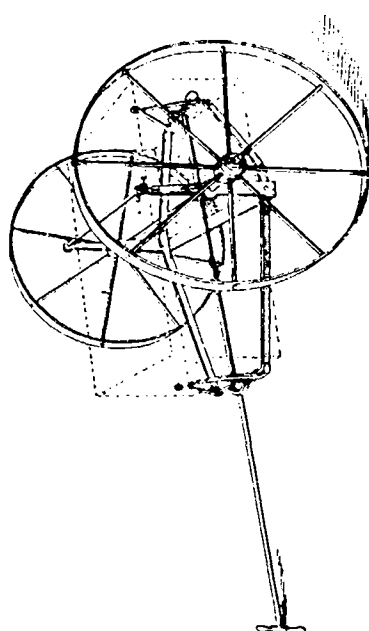


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.



Scale 1/2"

In time of peace they could be used for the removal of ball ammunition to and from magazines, or for the issue or collection of blank ammunition. They would prove of great service in judging-distance-practice, reconnoitring, route marching, laying out lines for trenches, and bases for surveys.

Instead of ammunition, some of these cars might be used to carry intrenching tools, and one or two ought to be fitted with surgical implements and a few useful medicines, which might be the means of saving many valuable lives.

This ammunition-supply-car is of full size, has wrought iron wheels and axle, and is consequently not liable to injury from bullets. The handle by which it is drawn, is a pioneer's spade, the blade of which and the two bill-hooks protect the ammunition.

SKELETON AMMUNITION CAR.

I have also constructed a skeleton-car (Fig. 2), on which the ordinary regulation rifle-ammunition-case or box can be placed, the box forming the body of the car. A box of ammunition can thus be conveyed to any part of the field, and when delivered, the skeleton car be returned to the magazine for another box.

The ammunition should be packed, according to my method (see Plate xvi, fig. 1), in cases containing 720 or 880 rounds; one uniform size and shape should be decided upon, and the cars made to fit them. The lid of the box should be made to slide out, to save the trouble of breaking it open.

In an admirable paper read at our last meeting, on the subject of "Military Transport,"* everything desirable seemed to be provided for, except a safer means of supplying ammunition *during action* from the divisional and brigade stores, to the troops actually under fire.

We must still depend upon railways, waggons, &c., and sumpter animals for the conveyance of rifle ammunition *from* the base of operations *to the field of action*, but, arrived *there*, it must be halted, magazines formed at a safe distance from the enemy, and the supply beyond *that point* must be continued, as I have already said, by means of hand-cars.

A bundle of 10 rounds of rifle-ammunition weighs 1 pound 5 drachms, therefore a case containing 720 would weigh 73 lbs. 6 ozs., and 880 rounds 89 lbs. 11 ozs.

Supposing one case to contain 880 rounds,

The weight of the cartridges would be 89 lbs. 11 ozs.

The box 5 "

The car 40 "

Total 134 " 11 "

About half the weight of the China ambulance barrow when *empty*.

* See Journal, vol. xiii., page 263.